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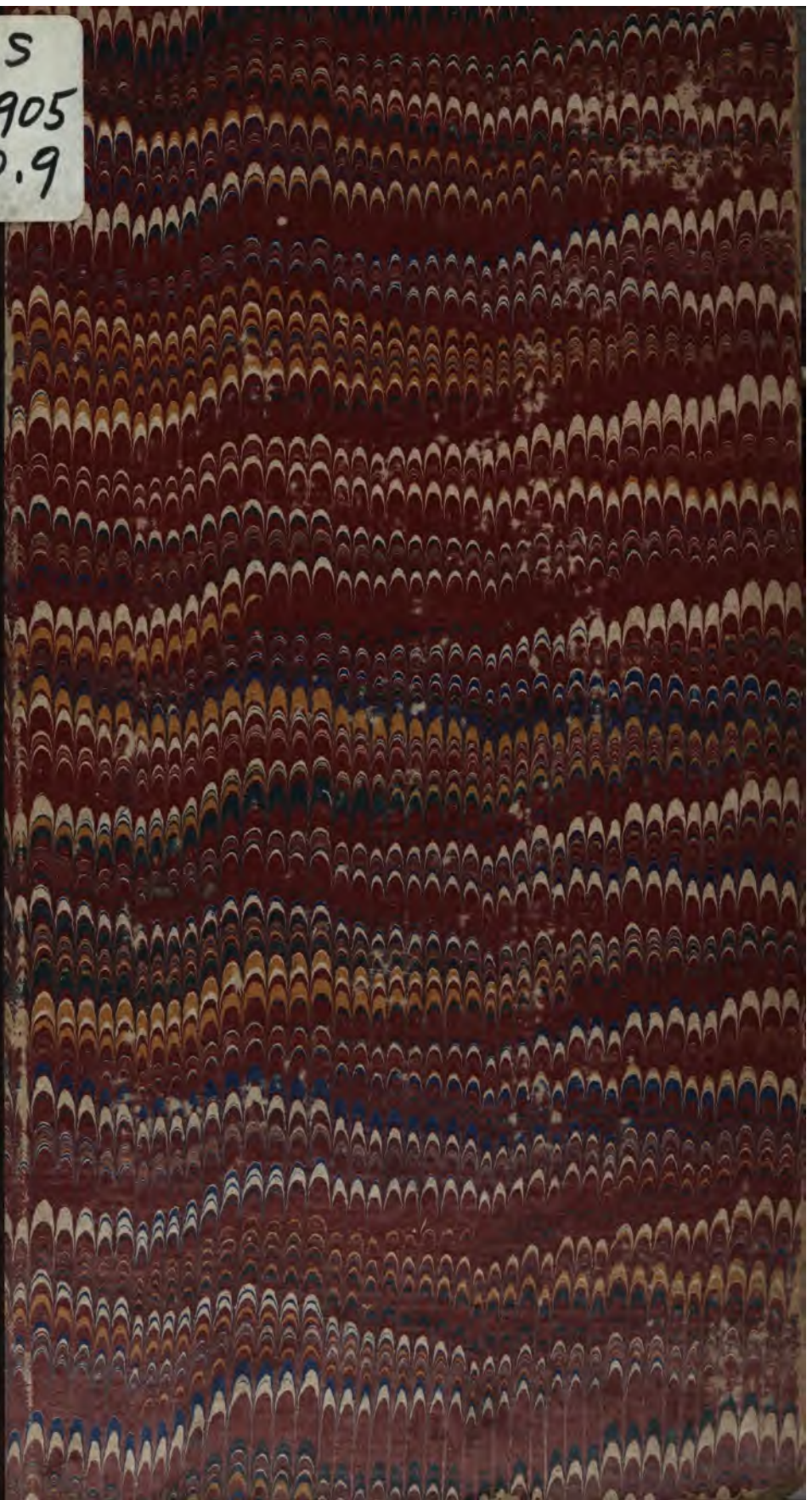
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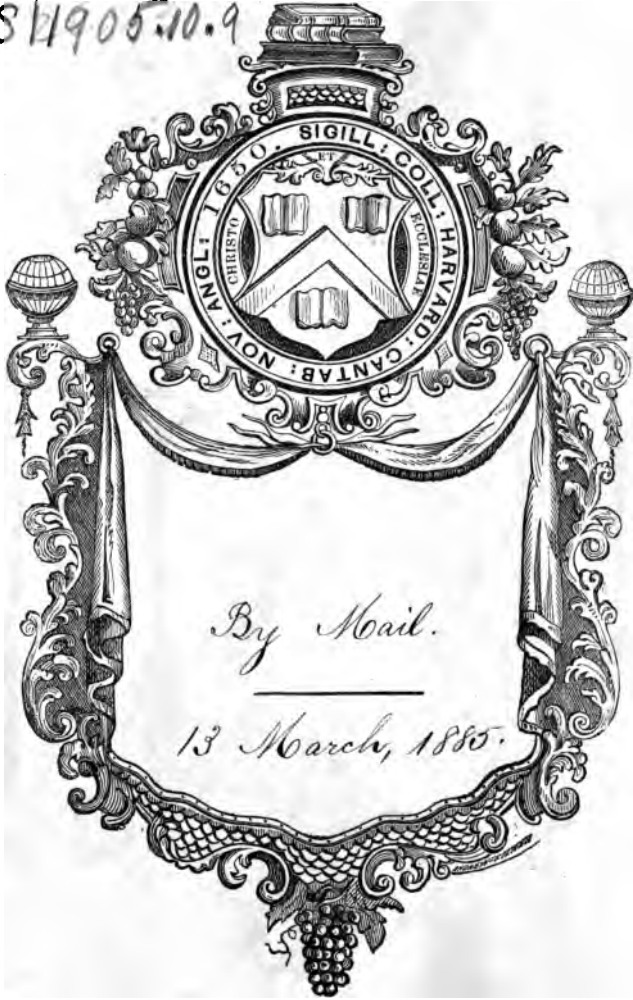
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ADDRESS

BY

ISAAC SPALDING WHITING,

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

WILTON, N. H., TOWN HOUSE,

JANUARY 1ST, 1885.

BOSTON:
J. A. CUMMINGS & CO., PRINTERS,
252 Washington Street.
1885.

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1885. Mar. 13,

By mail.

ADDRESS.

Ladies and Gentlemen.—Often in New England, when a man has built a new house, he calls his friends and neighbors to come and make merry with him in his new home, that the grasp of the hand, and the kind word, and the good cheer, may assure him that his new circumstances have not estranged him from his old friends, that their presence may put life and warmth into his new rooms, and that every old guest may find his place at the new table and in the new corners. So our pleasant task to-day is one grand house-warming. Our old and honored host, the town, bids each guest welcome. She throws open her doors and asks each one to inspect and admire her new quarters, each to find his chosen nook, and more than all, she wants each to feel from the presence of his neighbor that she is the same old host still.

Our first duty is to speak that word of congratulation that we all feel on the building as a structure. It has been our good fortune to secure the services of an intelligent architect, who has planned for us a structure worthy to be the town's own building, the place of its deliberations, the home of its politics; a building larger in size, more beautiful in design, and more central in position, than that of any private individual. It is among the first efforts in our town to combine beauty with usefulness. We have here swung away from the prevailing square box, and yet have obtained a building against which no criticism of foppery and ostentation can be brought. Its ornamental parts are its structural parts ingrained in its very being. Quiet and simple, yet not commonplace, it fulfils the chief canons of architectural taste. Its angles and curves present different combinations from different points of view, so that we never tire of it, and the more we see it the more beauties does it reveal. The joy forever in a beautiful object will be ours.

And this design has been executed by our own citizens in a way worthy of it. The reputation for thorough work which the contractors had heretofore built up in the community has been more than sustained in this building. Though much of the work was new in kind, and all of it of a somewhat greater magnitude than they were accustomed to, yet these men have worked on to the end, and earned the admiration of the whole community. And the same conscientiousness and nervous, restless care have been continued through these long weeks that we have seen them exhibit in shorter and more prosperous undertakings. They, as their brothers "in the elder days of art," have

"Wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
For the Gods see everywhere."

But the town house is not merely the rallying point where social kindness and graces have their place; it is the market place where the duties of citizenship are exercised. Here we shall hold our town meetings; here deliberate, and elect our officers. Thus the town house becomes the centre of our political activity, and at once suggests the duties of citizenship. Here every voter is brought face to face with the questions of appropriations and policy; his political duties in our system can not be delegated; his responsibility is measured by the interests of his fellow-townsmen—but it is an individual responsibility, and brings in its train to him and to our race blessings and duties, which through familiarity, we are prone to underrate and ignore. The prototype of the New England town meeting was to be seen 2,000 years ago in Germany, on the banks of the Elbe, and at the base of the Danish peninsular. Society was primitive, but was based on a principle that outlasted all rivals of its

and patient toil in precedents and authorities, we must not look for from this system. Although nearly every session deals with matters large enough to occupy the mind weeks and months, and competent to affect the people of the State deeply for good or evil, we must call it good fortune if our legislators, as a whole, give them a moments thought. We have had warning this summer of contemplated legislation regarding the railroads at the next session. Has anybody in this town paid the least attention to that subject? Not the last representative, for he had served two terms and he knew it was written in laws as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians that he must make room for somebody else; nor yet the man we elected in November, for who in the summer or fall could know on whom the town's favor would light. No better plan could be devised to break down the sense of responsibility in the representative than this. With the certainty of losing his place at the next election, or the next but one, what motive is there for the study of those large State problems which can be mastered only months after he has ceased to occupy a place where he can bring the results of his studies to bear upon legislation? What suitable conditions for the birth and growth of that legislative temperament and statesman's instinct which may guide when clearer signs are obscured? What outward motive for fidelity and industry, when fidelity and industry are rewarded like indifference and sloth? What securer screen for idleness and ignorance than a putting aside without exposure? To fail to reward virtue is to throw away our readiest means of securing the services of virtue; while to treat insufficiency and idleness in the same way as we do virtue, is to discourage virtue if not to abase it.

This ignorance and indifference is the soil in which corruptionists and jobbers flourish. They know what is good for *them*, if our legislators do not know what is good for us. They can keep busy the attention of the house so that its own listlessness shall not be a bore to it, and make our Solons turn the wheels of legislation and grind out the adulterate cob-stuff in place of the pure kernels that would infuse healthful life through all the veins of the body politic. That a man of fifteen years experience in the State House should more thoroughly comprehend the needs of the State and more quickly recognize a good bill than a green man could possibly do, we must all admit. Pride alone to maintain his place—for I would not carry this principle so far as to keep in office a manifestly incompetent man—would provoke him to keep abreast of the times, and to fix his point of view at Concord. Then might the town take some pride in the work it had done toward helping to push New Hampshire forward among the States of the Union. As it is, who ever hears of Wilton? If a debater wants to know how to take advantage of the rules to advance his measure, does he consult the Wilton member? No. The Wilton member is a brand new man just sent up to be educated in that very particular. If anybody is drafting a bill, say for regulating the building of railroads in the State, does he consult the Wilton member on the advisability of this plan or that? No. The Wilton member has just come into the atmosphere of such questions. We have never given him any encouragement to think of that.

It is the common report that this evil is prevalent throughout the State. What should we do if there were no exceptions? What, if not for the few familiar faces whom some of our towns have the wit to return year after year to do our work for us. Some of them you will say are men of marked ability, bound to make the laws any way, whether we send new men or old. I grant it, and I should urge the sending of the best ability we can command. I am glad that along with experience we may sometimes secure natural ability. But many of them are not men of natural powers; they take the position they do because of their familiarity with the business of the State. I make no complaint against the ability of any one or all of our representatives. I take my stand now against change for the sake of change. I read through the long list, and I see

there the names of many men who I know, with the development and experience that would come with a long term, would reflect honor upon the town and advance the good of the State. But our mad practice has cut short their public service, and we have cheated ourselves out of the benefits they were competent to give us.

Are we to continue this absurdity? It is still capable of expansion. Not all the members of the dominant party have been paid out of the State treasury. Of the 250 and more in town who are eligible, there must be at least 150 that have not had the office. To be fair and logical, they ought to be sent one after the other, and if this is so, what shall we say of that recent change from one session every year to one every other year. Fifty per cent. of every democrat's chances in this town were then discounted at one fell swoop. They may die now before their turn comes. Instead of being halved, the number of sessions should have been doubled, and trebled, and quadrupled, yes, the legislature should sit all the time and a new man be elected every month. These are some of the absurdities the logic of the practice leads us into. Shall we not desist from this vain effort to please all the individuals in town, and turn about to please the town as a corporation. Shall we not seize upon that tradition already established among us that everybody that goes once shall go twice? Shall we not pick out the best of those that have already learned the way a little, and expand the tradition so that our place in the House shall be filled year after year by the same able, intelligent and experienced man ten, twenty, even thirty years together?

I am able to enforce this thesis by reference to two town offices that have escaped this evil—the treasuryship, and secretaryship. Of the treasuryship I have not taken the figures, but the term of the present holder is known to be long. In the secretaryship the average is seven years; too small a figure, but yet a better showing than in any other office. But on the other hand, it is here that we have the most exemplary terms. We have had selectmen ten and fourteen, and even fifteen years in office, in the beginning of the century, and a few representatives of eleven years, also in the old times. But we have kept one secretary nineteen years, the present incumbent fifteen years, and one thirty-three years,—our great high-water mark. The convenience and usefulness to the public due to long terms, can be tested by any one having to inquire of a fact coming within the scope of the duties of either of these officers, say ten years ago. Familiarity with the affairs of their duty enables either to tell you at once what, under the rotating system, you must hunt for through many men's memories and unused volumes.

Another chance to better ourselves is in the issues we make up to vote upon for our town officers. For presidential electors we divide on the lines of the great national parties. We are democrat or republican, according as one party or the other seems sounder on national questions. Not to do so would be to deny our duties to the Union, of which we are a part. But can we say there is reason for keeping up the party lines in town affairs? Assuming for the time that a democrat means one who believes in state rights, and republican means one who believes in union, can we say that those terms have any application to local matters? Does the election of the democratic candidate for the selectmanship have any influence on the national question? Can he when elected do a single thing to secure its rights to any State? We know well enough that he can not. If the issue can be anything else than interest in the public business and good judgment,—and possibly the control over appropriations by the town may limit it to that—we know it should be something like this: whether on the one hand the bulk of our annual appropriation for roads should be spent on one road, to bring it into a high state of perfection, and the rest on the worst places of the others, to make them merely passable for the time being, or on the other hand, the whole of the annual appropriation should be distributed equally over all the roads in town. In other words, whether to elevate the standard of the roads at the cost of some tempo-

rary inconvenience, or to maintain them as they are without any inconvenience. This is only a sample of a town question. It would suggest ideas to every townsman, and from different points of view. We should range intelligently on either side of it, nominate selectmen who favored one side or the other, discuss it in meeting and on the street, and so form parties that would have a direct bearing on town affairs and issues that the town might settle. But the forces of old association are too much for us, and we go on nominating and electing men as if we were to make a permanent settlement of the great national questions, and we never think of bringing our local politics home to local affairs.

It is a more disagreeable task to speak of the petty jealousies and side issues that we permit to come in to influence our politics. How common it is for us to vote for a man solely because he goes to our church, or is our relative, or, commonest of all, because he is a good fellow. We pass by every year men whom we know to be excellent for many town places, and yet can not bring ourselves to put them up because they do not satisfy these and other irrelevant conditions. We are so connected with each other by blood and marriage, and our intimacy makes our faults so truly annoying, that I wonder we let side matters come in so little as we do. Here is the chance we give the city to make flings at the country. This, too, is one of the reasons I believe for the changes in our selectmen. If the selectmen have assessed our property up to the standard, or have demanded from us a full day's work in return for a full day's pay from the town, we deem it sufficient cause to change them at the next meeting. Though that very act proved them to be excellent servants of the town, we personally had expected favors. Because of our past kindness to them as individuals, we had expected kindness from them as town officers. But such equities can not be counterpleaded. We shall never have good officers until we are able to look at men solely with reference to the office, and absolutely free from reference to ourselves. It will be one of the last products of human discipline. I know that humanity touches us on so many sides, and deals with us in so many aspects, that in ordinary life we must compare it with ourselves, but we must shift our point of view when we look at public affairs. The town offices are not social clubs to be filled with good fellows whom we like to meet and talk with. They are only agencies for executing public business. We know well enough the principles upon which it should be done, and the penalty of our disobedience of them. The forces of nature will not accommodate themselves to our disobedience of her laws. The rain beats as hard against our roads and bridges whether well or ill built, whether made by personal friends or personal enemies, in sublime indifference to what we thought of the makers. The supremest point of human discipline is reached when we are able to vote against our very brother, if he is not fitted for the place, or to vote for the most offensive neighbor and meanest sneak, if he is.

I know I risk your favor further by touching on the subject of New Hampshire's place in national politics. It is more disheartening than local politics, and besides we have little control over the remedy. Complaints of the inadequacy of congressmen are common to all the states of the Union. The peculiar position of New Hampshire is that her people are never tired of boasting that she is the home and nurse of great men; but our work in the elections tallies sadly with our pretensions, and our never-ending praise of our giants of old invites comparison with our delegations of to-day, and destroys the security from examination and remark that we might have won from silence.

We have only to thank ourselves that the case is so. As a body we have withdrawn so far from the every-day work of politics, that there is room for any self-seeker to step in and usurp the sacred places. Although the people are the government, they will not govern. Their interest can be aroused only in some great crisis, perhaps after an abuse has become too glaring to be endured. The mighty word of New Hampshire's

mightiest son, that was thought to formulate the political creed of the nation, must be amended if it is to be applicable to our every-day practice to "by the cliques *from* the rings *for* the boss." After centuries of toil and oceans of blood to obtain what the people now possess, they push it from them as the Stuarts did their crowns. The state of the public mind logically calls for a king; a creature ready-made for the place of government, whose succession by nature would relieve us from the trouble of electing our officers.

I can not believe that we have not still men of ability and character. I can not believe that the old mother of men is suckled so dry that she has not milk enough to raise even a second-rate man. I can not believe that we have not still men who think more on questions of administration and policy than on the manipulation of the nominating machinery,—men that know and feel the wide difference between the politician and the statesman. I believe the trouble is that we do not take the pains to find them out. We sit like dowerless spinsters who

"number o'er
The costly gems their granddams wore."

while the work of to-day, by which we might continue our glory, remains undone.

As for Senators, I believe I have already spoken of the remedy. With a longer term of service from the representatives of the towns and wards to Concord, why is it not fair to assume that they would be better acquainted with the able and reputable men of the State? Why would not the expectation of having to vote upon them in the future, stimulate our representatives to watch our Senators at Washington, and so be prepared to reject or continue them when they came up for re-election at Concord? Why, in the case of the new aspirant, sick with the senatorial fever, would they not, like experienced doctors, detect at once whether he had constitution enough of brains and moral fibre to carry him through? Why, with a constantly enlarging acquaintance throughout the State, would they not have means of finding out, in the case of every applicant, whether he had built up that reputation for honesty at home that is a guaranty of incorruptibility at Washington, and whether he had taken that wide interest in public affairs, and had made those studies in the principles of political economy that are some safeguard against narrow and ignorant voting?

I know that long terms are not a panacea; but they are at least something within the power of the people, and it is time to do what we can. The influence of New England in the country is steadily diminishing. The great States graciously grant to New Hampshire the honor of being the play-ground of the country for the hot weather. We probably have not a single interest of any kind that is not dwarfed to nothingness by the same in some other State. Our opportunities of making ourselves prominent and useful are reduced to a few. That the mighty States of New York and Pennsylvania do no better at Washington than we is nothing to the point. Rather let us look to our sister across the Connecticut, to Delaware and Mississippi, all secondary States like our own, whose Edmunds, Bayard and Lamar hush the voice of the slanderer, and compel those to respect that come to deride.

It would ill become me not to except those Senators of the State who, while not conspicuous, have done faithful and unostentatious service. After failing to find the very best, we would gladly accept those who could not originate great legislation nor make telling speeches. That a man should work faithfully, resist temptation manfully, be liberal-minded, are some of the essentials; but we are not allowed to have always even this sort of man; and if by chance we get him, the boss, the machine or some monster, which we plain people do not understand, cheats us out of him.

For the sake of completeness, I must mention our representatives in Congress. The way to reform here lies through the people, and he would

be a bold man that would hope to rouse them from their apathy. The cliques and bosses in the cities have it all their own way. We vote the ticket they put into our hands and say nothing. Though the towns may send delegates to the convention of a Congressional district, yet the delegates do not know any good man to nominate, they are not united, and so fall an easy prey to the cliques who are ready with their man, upon whom they are united, and they easily win through their steadfastness of purpose and their unity.

The first thing that suggests itself for our use is a machine to pit against their machine; to fight fire with fire. But the difficulty of organizing a widely-separated people, a people too busy with their own affairs to attend to public duties, and of keeping the machine out of the hands of its enemies, when formed, makes the suggestion ludicrous, even farcical. Differentiation is the order of the day; politics have become so weighty and so unweildy, and organizing-skill is so important and so necessary, that the development of a disinterested body of men to look after the interests of the people in the nominations, and do little else, would be natural; a great every-day apathy among the people; a body of young men full of enthusiasm and possessed of different notions of politics from those of their elders; a vast reservoir of patriotism in the people; a widely scattered population; the force of old customs; these are some of the facts in the situation. But I can only jumble them into a mass, without drawing conclusions from them. They impress me much as does a woman's crazy cushion. There are elements of strength and beauty in it, but there is need of the organizing hand to throw them into proper relations, and to make even its neutral and darker tints contribute to the perfection of the whole.

But politics are not all that make a town. It may be well governed, and yet not be fit to live in. To fully know its condition we must examine its institutions, and the kind of people in it. Here, too, our early work has been well done. We of to-day have come into an ample inheritance.

The story of the settlement is much like that of all towns, but the heroism of one's own ancestry is so delightful to hear that I shall be pardoned if I touch upon it. The first settlers came in 1739. Our imagination must be stimulated if we would conceive of the conditions of their life. In place of the fields, and roads, and barns, and houses, that now cover the landscape, they found an unbroken wilderness. Their houses were log huts which contained but the most meager furniture. Life was reduced to its lowest terms. We must picture the cold and desolation of the lonely forest, the hunger, perhaps the starvation, the dread of hostile Indians. Added to these terrors, when the strong arm was needed to keep body and soul together, and the stout heart to cheer up the loneliness, the settler in one of the huts died. It was in winter, and the other settlers had gathered into a block-house, near the site of the Lyndeboro Glass works, for safety from the Indians. The courage of this man had placed him not only on the borders of civilization, but had made him its most advanced guard. The horrors of the isolation of his wife and children during his sickness, we of this time, surrounded by friends, cannot dream of. Once he is dead, she left the body with her children with instructions not to go near him lest they wake their sleeping father, and dragged herself to the block-house on snow-shoes. His coffin was a dug-out tree. So died the first man that died in this town. His name was John Badger, and his hut was near where Mr. Peacock now lives. His name will always be dear to our memory, and his story must bring home to us what had to be endured once, that we may enjoy the comfort we do to-day.

The settlement thus started grew. The spirit of adventure and acquisition, perhaps joined with religious zeal, doubtless often a stranger to the Puritan's passion for freedom to worship God, was showing itself in these remote tracts. Land was granted here for service in the Canadian wars. The older parts of the country sent out colonists here. By 1786, there were one thousand persons in town.

Along with people came institutions. The famous meeting house in the centre of the town—burnt in 1859—was then built. The first appropriation was £150, and the periodical votes of more money have a strangely familiar sound. It was a noteworthy building, in all respects built with sacrifices of money and labor, and, moreover, the circumstance of its double use, for religion and politics, make it worthy of mention to-day, when we dedicate its successor.

But the greatest corporate work of the early days, were the roads. No better mark of the progress in civilization of a people can be had than its means of communication. Judged by this standard, the early inhabitants occupy advanced ground. Hardly one of the annual half-dozen town meetings passed without accepting a road. The rapid settlement of the lands necessitated the occupation of remote districts. The whole of the town was settled over early, and roads by which to get from place were indispensable. Doubtless we must not set too high a value upon these early road-makings. Their very number would preclude much excellence, and there is no mention of appropriations. Two days work upon the roads for every man was all that was voted to repair them. The trail, or the rude pathway, were all that were needed for the horse with panniers and the ox-cart. But the real road building of the town, and what I consider its greatest work, until now, did not begin until 1825, and ended in 1852. Wagons had now come into general use, and the old roads leading mostly to the centre of the town had been widened and smoothed, and the larger streams spanned with bridges. But now a spirit of improvement and enterprise set in, and new roads were pushed through to open new lands, and serve as thoroughfares for ourselves and our neighbors above to Boston. The Peterboro road, the forest road, the Milford road, and others were built in this period, and the grade lessened on some of the old ones. Familiarity with these means of travel, that most of us were born to, blinds us to their importance, and to the immense labors our ancestors endured to obtain them. If, as we ride along with our sleigh full, we would but consider that once the pathway was as rough as the pastures and woods and boulders on either side, we should realize the debt we owe to our fore-runners. Without them business would be impossible, and social intercourse all but unknown. The records are not complete, and my examination, with Mr. Putnam, has not been exhaustive, but we figure up \$9,000 spent in these years for construction and land damages. The real cost must have been several thousand more,—perhaps not far behind the cost of this building. If I mention the railroad, which was built by private enterprise, I have named nearly all the public institutions that belong to pioneer work.

If, now, our fathers' time was the time of pioneer work, and if their's was the period of the struggle for existence, it would seem that it was our duty to advance upon their state and create her some of the products of a later and more civilized time. With the completion of the rough work, and increase of property, we must have time and strength left free from bread earning, for cultivation of self, and improvement and adornment of the town. I know I trench here upon doubtful ground. I know, too, that what was true in the forty's and fifty's is not true to-day. At that time, with a constant and growing market in New England, which could be supplied with agricultural products only from New England, our prospects were bright for increase of population and of wealth, and the things they bring. But the Texan steer stalked suddenly out of the mist, and our tended and housed cattle could not stand up against him. The railroads stretched their arms into the West, and brought back grain from lands, the richness of which was fabulous to the rock-born New England farmer. The application of steam to machinery stole away from us the advantage we had in our thousands of streams, even before we had ourselves wantonly destroyed them by cutting off the forest that fed them. Moreover the rapid development of the resources of the country, called

away to the cities a class of men whose great works there are but cold comfort to the towns who have lost their help. I believe the New England farmer of thirty or forty years ago is dead without successor. I conceive him to have been a man of liberal mind, of acute interest in public affairs, who worked half a day in the field, and the other half in law, religion, politics, or business; who gave himself time for social works, and for the observation of the world's doings. But the need of lawyers, doctors, and merchants, soon called for the whole time of all that had any ability for those things. Although, perhaps, the present farmers are better tillers of the soil than their fathers, yet the diverse abilities and interests of the older men would have made themselves felt in the villages in one social or business attraction or another, while the leisure and simplicity of the times must have thrown a charm about the farms that modern conditions have dissipated. Our own times have imposed limitations upon us that we must abide by. If we say that the great amount of knowledge in all departments, combined with fierce competition, has compelled him who would succeed to devote his whole soul to his one business, we only utter a platitude; but in those days it probably was not true, certainly not stale. I suspect that while those men of the old time farmed, they were but half farmers and half something else. We of to-day have learned the lesson of the times, and we content ourselves with the best results that nature and our conditions permit. From these causes: loss of men, opening of richer lands, progress in arts and science, the New England towns have been checked in their advance. We have not to show what we might have been expected to show in my father's early life. The things that wealth would bring, the things that a large population and diverse business would bring, are not ours. Moreover, in my own time, we have been called off from our regular work to repair the frightful ravages of flood and fire.

But our resources and benefits are yet great and secure. The railroad has been our friend as well as our enemy. Though it has wrested from us our old business, it has yet developed a new kind, which would have been impossible without it. The giant lines that stretch into the West and South, contribute to our support no less than our own short strip. Our soil, though barren, must yield a competence in the production of those perishable articles that will not bear days and weeks of transportation from the richer lands. And in the moral realm, the possession of the New England towns are things that will hold the body of her people to her, against all the attractions of the world. There still live here, as of old, pride in home and town, self-respect, disposition to improve, thrift, and conservatism. We possess the indissoluble power that home and tradition exert. The pleasures of friendship, and the thousand small joys and benefits of an established community, are ours beyond the possibility of loss.

And if we would hold our own and advance these affections and longings point out the way. If there exists a great natural attraction in the soil of the West, we must create artificial ones here. So far as the West appeals to the love of gain, we must appeal to the love of home and society. We must throw out into contrast the manners and conservatism of the East, and the radicalism and roughness of the West. If the South allures us, we must be made to compare carefully its squalid and slovenly villages, with our neatness and kemptness. The invisible chains that link to home, must be made so abundant and so strong that they can not be broken.

Such a purpose would seize upon all the improvements of the age that were indicated by our conditions. Think for a moment where the town would be to-day if there had not been enterprise enough here to build the railroad. There would be no village where we now stand, and little if any manufacturing. With a diminishing farming population, and no other industry to take the place of farming, the current of progress would have left us stranded high and dry, feeble in numbers, and of no diversity in sentiment and judgment. The moral influence of the railroad will be

recognized by every man who but compares his own town with those lying near, who from any reason, good or bad, did not seize upon the opportunity at the time of its building to lift themselves into the atmosphere of the new life.

If I were to name some of the things that have occurred to me that belong to our time to do, the first would be the building of a library. We want histories to teach us of former experiments in government, and of the rise and fall of parties; we want novels to take us out of our work-a-day life, and to put us into the life of other classes; we want to learn that human nature is the same in palace and cottage; and we want poetry for our darker moments, and to instruct the imagination with fancies we could never dream of alone. But it is a waste of time to speak of our want of books. Our former possession has created a desire that our misfortunes have left unsatisfied. We are all of one mind. The appropriate word of to-day is patience till we complete the shell, and till our pocketbooks are replenished.

Another thing we might do is the shading of our roads. I speak not of the limits of the village, where the private enterprise of each individual has adorned his immediate premises with all the public spirit that could be desired; I refer to the roads that stretch out all through the town. To obtain a fair result we need only to instruct our road agents to cut out with care the small stuff that grows beside the road, and to leave standing at proper intervals such trees as will develop into throwers of shade in the summer, and into wind-breaks in winter. Somebody has set us an example of this care just above Mr. Daniel Cragin's. But to accomplish the best result we must build up such a public spirit that the abutters will leave not only such young trees, but half and full-grown trees, when they cut their forests. With generosity among the owners, and recognition of it among the travellers, we might, in a dozen or twenty years, have a substantial attraction and comfort to ourselves and strangers, and a notice to travellers the moment they crossed the town line that they were within a progressive town.

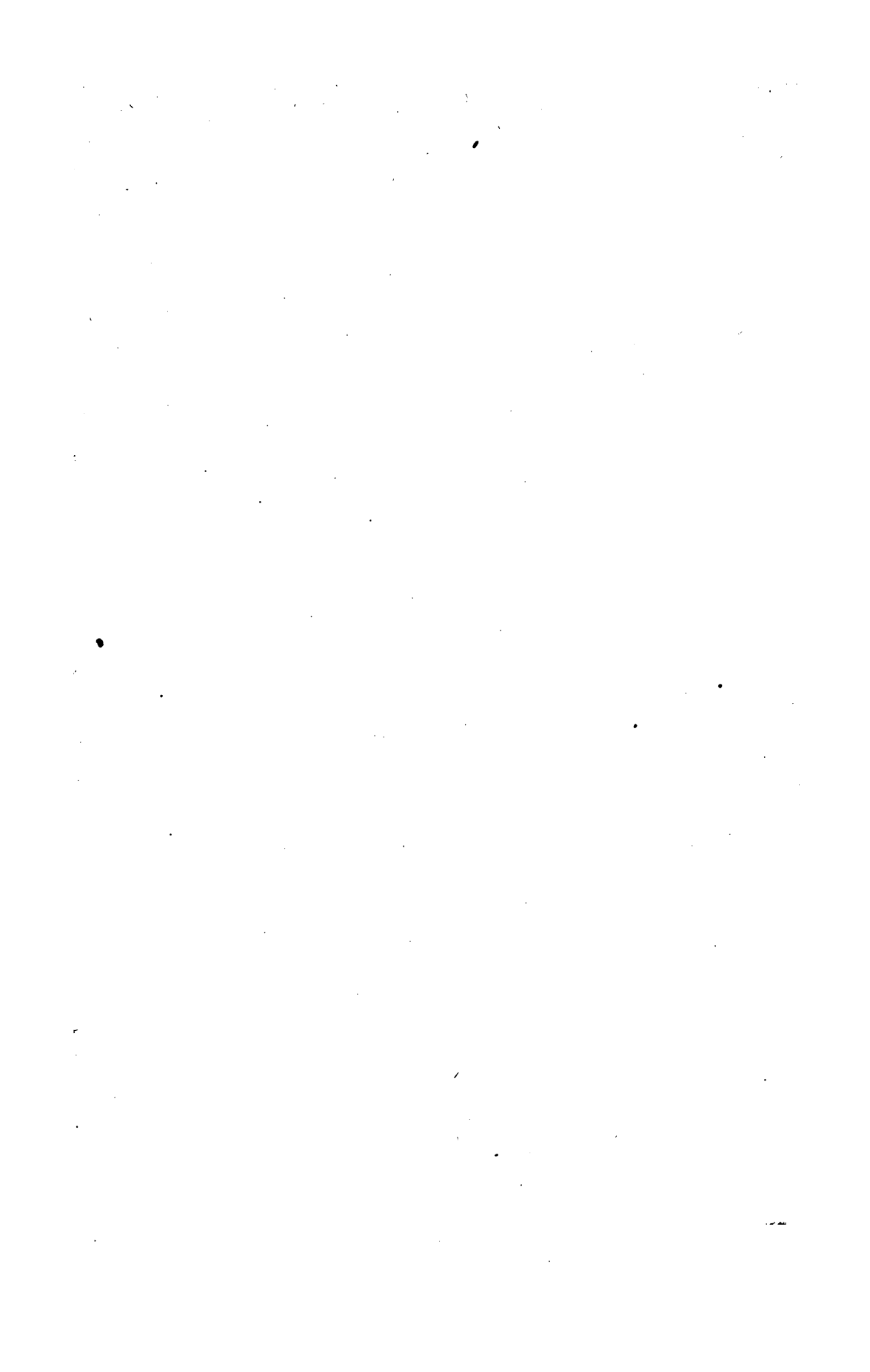
Of this kind of work is this building. It belongs to the time of improvement; of striving for ideal things. As a matter of dollars and cents we had better have endured the old hall. Though useful and comfortable, we had gotten along without it. Its function is as much that of a model and exemplar as a doer. Its beauty and simplicity are ever present standards by which to judge of our efforts in all our doings. We are among the last of the towns in the neighborhood to build a town house. They have stimulated us to put our best foot forward; we believe they can not be ashamed of our achievement. As the ancient bell-towers of Italy were placed at easy intervals, so that the whole people might be warned to be up and doing for the common safety, so the towns of New England have erected town houses to be ever-present warnings to every man that, in her system, his duties are never done. We should not like to be behind in that work. We should not like to see broken at our doors the continuity of the New England custom.

It is the product of our best enterprise and of our most advanced public spirit. Born in a gift, that gift has provoked other gifts, and so on, till everybody has brought his contribution of material or service for the ornamentation of our common building. It has lifted us into heights of generosity that we never dared to believe we could climb. It has strengthened us with the strength that comes to a people inspired with a common thought, and working for a common ideal end. In the middle ages the people were so filled with religious zeal that they left all else to carry stones and mortar for the erection of those great churches and cathedrals that we go so far to see. In the beautiful language of an old writer, "it was as if the earth, rousing itself and casting away its old robes, clothed itself with the white garment of churches." Our clearer ideas of religion stand in the way of such enthralling devotion, and the multitude of creeds divides our allegiance, but we all vie in devotion to

one common state, we recognize one common sovereignty, and we all lay our hands to the upbuilding of her visible representative.

Who knows but that the church may once more unite the town in a common sentiment. When Orthodox and Unitarians shall each have learned something from the other, and when two attenuated societies have approached nearer the vanishing point, perhaps they will come together again to hear the great principles of christianity which they both believe in. Perhaps, too, when they shall have become tired of heating and painting two barn-like churches, they will gather again into the town hall and marry once more the long-divorced church and state.

It is in such things as this building and in moral improvements that our way lies open. To build in the best way, even to fastidiousness, what new things we build, to improve the old, to attract to this town all that would come to the country to live, to supplement the natural scenery with intelligent and agreeable men and women, are our task. And if we would keep our capital of youth and money at home, it must be, beyond all question, by such means as these. It has been said that it is our duty to send them out; that the most glorious product of any soil is its men. It may be the patriot's duty to plant the New England heart and brain through all parts of our common country, but we must be parental before we are patriotic. If they will but be satisfied with a competence from our barren hills, we will give them the advantages of home and society. But if they must make money, our prayers shall follow them to their Western isolation, and we will consent to be patriotic if they will but build up, bit by bit, a new New England village.









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